

have challenged the United States. I am very confident of that, and I think most of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are. We need to get working together on that.

TRIBUTE TO ROD BOYCE

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is not Thursday yet, but it is almost Thursday, and that is when I love to come down to the floor of the U.S. Senate to recognize an Alaskan who is doing something great for our State. And as many know here, we call this person our Alaskan of the Week.

Now, it is one of my favorite times of the week. I know that a couple of Hill watchers like it too. I want to give a shout-out to Chris Cioffi from Roll Call. He actually did a piece in Roll Call today about the "Alaskan of the Week" series. So thank you, Chris. I hope you are watching. It is a little late, and it is not Thursday. But anyway, I appreciate the shout-out in your series today.

I am going to get to the punch. Our Alaskan of the Week tonight, this week, is Rod Boyce, a friend of mine, a former longtime editor of one of my favorite—actually, it is my favorite newspaper in Alaska, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. He clearly is deserving of this great, important award.

But before I talk about Rod, let me give you a little update about what is going on in the State. First, some good news, something we are all very proud of in Alaska. The economy is hurting; we are not proud of that. But in terms of the pandemic, the health elements, our State continues to be the No. 1 State vaccinated per capita of any State in the country. This is a minimiracle, by the way, because we are a really big State, and we are really spread out, a really small population. And yet, the Federal Government, Tribal healthcare system, VA, State of Alaska, everybody coming together is making it happen.

About 3 weeks ago, we announced that anyone over 16 could get a vaccine. And some communities are hitting 60, 70 percent vaccinated already in Alaska. Really important. We are opening up. If you are watching, and you don't live in Alaska, come visit. It is going to be safe, but we are very proud of that accomplishment because it has taken a lot of work.

Of course, it is cold in Alaska, but the Sun has been shining. The snow has been amazing. We have had a lot of it recently. The spirits are up. We have an Iditarod winner. Congratulations to Dallas Seavey on your fifth Iditarod win. Incredible, incredible.

You know, some may take issue with the claim that Alaska is the most unique State in the Union, but consider this: Every year, teams of mushers and their dogs barrel hundreds of miles across the State toward the city of Nome, in some of the harshest conditions, rugged conditions on the planet Earth.

Certainly, these are the kind of events that we think make Alaska unique and a big sense of community. I have said it before: Alaska isn't always the easiest place to live. It is far from the lower 48. The weather can be extreme, very tough. But as a result, the people and communities bond, and they work together, particularly in some of our most remote communities. We are one big community in the great State of Alaska, as my colleague from Nebraska knows.

Every community in Alaska, in America, needs to be able to share reliable, credible information. On that topic, of course, there has been a lot of negative attention in the past couple of years paid to some in the national media, particularly in the last few years. But the vital role, the vital role of local journalism and how that role that plays in different communities across our country, in my view, hasn't had nearly enough attention, and it is a positive role, our local reporters.

So our Alaskan of the Week, Rod Boyce, who, until just a few weeks ago was the longtime editor of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, spent nearly his entire career, 35 years, ensuring that Alaskans stayed connected through local news.

Now, Rod himself hasn't made huge headlines in the State. As a matter of fact, that is one of the reasons for the Alaskan of the Week, to do a shout-out to someone who has not gotten a lot of recognition. The only time Rod has gotten a lot of headlines was one instance of a mushing mishap. I am going to talk briefly about that. But as an old-school newsman, he liked to stay behind the headlines, behind the scenes.

But he has been behind the scenes of so many of those headlines in our State. For years, he worked tirelessly—first at papers across the State and then for 27 years at the News-Miner—to keep the great community of Fairbanks and North Pole, AK, the interior part of our State, connected and informed.

So here is a little bit about Rod. Born in London, England—I have known Rod for many years, but I did not know that fact. Born in London, England, his family moved to Southern California in the 1960s. His father designed and engineered refineries. And Rod's father and his wife—Rod's mom—raised both him and his sister.

He wasn't sure what he wanted to do in life, but he was inspired by a trip he took to England early in his college career, came back with a camera that he actually found on a bench in the Heathrow Airport. It is an interesting detail. And he found his calling in journalism. He was the editor of the school newspaper at Humboldt State University and did some stints at small papers, landed at the Sacramento Union—the oldest paper in the West, by the way—one that Mark Twain used to write for. It was his first experience with a good old-fashioned newspaper

war. The younger, afternoon paper, the Sacramento Bee, decided to take on the establishment Sacramento Union. Eventually, the Bee won. But by then, Rod had made his way to the great State of Alaska to enter another, even bigger newspaper war: the Anchorage Times, the established paper, versus the upstart Anchorage Daily News.

Any person in news in Alaska who has been around a while will talk about that newspaper war with something of awe in their voice. Both papers then were fully staffed up, at least 30 reporters each, bureaus all across the State, even bureaus here in DC, pre-social media days, pre-Twitter days. Reporters spent their days on the streets, knocking on doors, stealing each other's scoops. It was called shoe leather reporting, and some great journalism in Alaska emerged.

Eventually, the upstart, the young Anchorage Daily News—still around—won the war. So Rod was on the losing team. He began to work for a small chain of six or seven rural papers called Alaska Newspapers, Inc. It was here that Rod got his first glimpse of rural Alaska. He learned about fisheries issues, ate his first piece of muktuk. That is whale blubber. He experienced the beauty and became aware of the heartbreak of rural Alaska, the true spiritual soul of our State, one of the spiritual souls of America, I would argue.

After a few years with Alaska newspapers, he took the job that he has been so good at for almost three decades, editor of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, which is my wonderful wife Julie's hometown. It is the first city I lived in with Julie and our brandnew daughter of ours, Meghan, and, of course, I can still consider the News-Miner to be my hometown newspaper.

As I mentioned, Rod was an editor for 27 years for this great interior Alaska paper. The News-Miner is small but mighty in Alaska, punching way above its weight, winning numerous journalism awards, breaking important stories on health crises, injustice, scandals, economic opportunities, everyday stories about everyday people, the kind of stories that draw us together as communities.

As Rod said, "It's not just national journalism that matters. Local journalism matters [too]."

To that end, it was his policy, until he just retired a couple of weeks ago, to have at least 95 percent of the front page of the News-Miner devoted to local news. That is a great idea.

So many Alaskans have interests, hobbies, lifestyles that many here in the lower 48 just don't understand, Rod included. For many years, he spent his days in the newsroom and his evenings and weekends mushing dogs. And he still mushes. He loves it. It is a family affair. He and his wife Julie used to put their daughter, Edie, in a sled when she was just in diapers. And Edie is still doing it. The most dogs they have ever

had now is 27. It is down to 18. This is hard work. It is tons of work. My wife Julie and her family also raised sled dogs. It is really hard work, particularly in the cold, interior Alaska winters. And it is also dangerous, as Rod can attest.

In 2000, when competing for the first time in the 200-mile Tustumena 200 Sled Dog Race on the Kenai Peninsula, he took a wrong turn. It was snowing hard. It was difficult to see. The trail got obliterated. And he couldn't figure out how to get back on the trail. So he staked his dogs and hunkered down on a ridge to build camp. He had some candy, Reese's Pieces, dried lamb for the dogs. He had a cooker, thermos, some fuel, some twigs. He had bunny boots, fortunately, but not a parka.

He spent his days exploring, going as far as he dared to try to find the trail at night. At night, he could hear the helicopters above, looking for Rod, but they couldn't see him through the cloud cover.

What was going on turned out to be one of the largest land search and rescue missions in Alaska history, trying to find Rod Boyce, the intrepid editor of the *News-Miner*. But he didn't know that. He just knew that his days were ticking away. Rod's wife Julie was worried sick, of course, but kept it together throughout. On the sixth day—sixth day—almost a week, when the sky cleared, he headed out again and a snow machine came his way. "I think I am the guy you're looking for," he told the driver, Ron Poston. Ron gave him a candy bar and a ride to safety.

That night, he and his wife celebrated with a beer and a cheeseburger. His feet were in bad shape, but otherwise he was unharmed. When he made it back to the newsroom, his fellow reporters put up markers that led from his parking space into the building in case he got lost again. He thought it was pretty funny.

On January 22, Rod Boyce left the *News-Miner* to take a job as a science writer and public information officer at the very cool and esteemed Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He spends his days now writing about Tsunamis and the skies and the heavens. He said:

It is a nerd's dream . . . I had a good 35-year run in newspapers and was very fortunate to experience the things that I did and interact with all sorts of public officials and regular folks on the street. I got to see them at their highs and lows, their tragedies and their happiest moments.

He still has hopes for local news. "A local news outlet can tie a local community together and that is super important. I hope that never changes," said Rod.

Me, too, Rod. Here is to local journalism. Here is to the mighty Fairbanks *News-Miner*, and here is to Rod Boyce. Thank you for being the guy behind the headlines all these many years. Thank you for keeping our communities and interior connected, and congratulations on perhaps one of the

biggest awards you have ever received, our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The majority leader.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 1868

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1868), to prevent across-the-board direct spending cuts, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. I now ask for a second reading and, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection being heard, the bill will be read on the next legislative day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

FILIBUSTER

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak at some length, if time will permit me, about the same subject my friend from Washington State so eloquently addressed. My colleagues know that although when I speak, I sometimes get very passionate, I have not very often, in past years, risen to the floor for any extended period of time. I do that today because so much is at stake.

For over 200 years, the Senate has embodied the brilliance of our Founding Fathers in creating an intricate system of checks and balances among the three branches of Government. This system has served two critical purposes, both allowing the Senate to act as an independent, restraining force on the excesses of the executive branch, and protecting minority rights within the Senate itself. The Framers used this dual system of checks and balances to underscore the independent nature of the Senate and its members.

The Framers sought not to ensure simple majority rule, but to allow minority views—whether they are conservative, liberal, or moderate—to have an enduring role in the Senate in order to check the excesses of the majority. This system is now being tested in the extreme.

I believe the proposed course of action we are hearing about these days is one that has the potential to do more damage to this system than anything that has occurred since I have become a Senator.

History will judge us harshly, in my view, if we eliminate over 200 years of precedent and procedure in this body and, I might add, doing it by breaking a second rule of the Senate, and that is changing the rules of the Senate by a mere majority vote.

When examining the Senate's proper role in our system of Government generally and in the process of judicial nominations specifically, we should begin, in my view, but not end with our Founding Fathers. As any grade school student knows, our Government is one that was infused by the Framers with checks and balances.

I should have said at the outset that I owe special thanks—and I will list them—to a group of constitutional scholars and law professors in some of our great universities and law schools for editing this speech for me and for helping me write this speech because I think it may be one of the most important speeches for historical purposes that I will have given in the 32 years since I have been in the Senate.

When examining the Senate's proper role in our system of Government and in the process of judicial nominations, as I said, we have to look at what our Founders thought about when they talked about checks and balances.

The theoretical underpinning of this system can be found in *Federalist 51* where the architect of our Constitution, James Madison, advanced his famous theory that the Constitution set up a system in which "ambition must be made to counteract ambition."

"Ambition must be made to counteract ambition." As Madison notes, this is because "[The] great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department consists in giving those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments by the other."

Our Founders made the conscious decision to set up a system of government that was different from the English parliamentary system—the system, by the way, with which they were the most familiar. The Founders reacted viscerally to the aggrandizement of power in any one branch or any person, even in a person or body elected by the majority of the citizens of this country.

Under the system the Founders created, they made sure that no longer would any one person or one body be able to run roughshod over everyone else. They wanted to allow the sovereign people—not the sovereign Government, the sovereign people—to pursue a strategy of divide and conquer and, in the process, to protect the few against the excesses of the many which they would witness in the French Revolution.

The independence of the judiciary was vital to the success of that venture. As *Federalist 78* notes:

The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited Constitution.

Our Founders felt strongly that judges should exercise independent judgment and not be beholden to any one person or one body. John Adams, in 1776, stated:

The dignity and stability of government in all its branches, the morals of the people,